

## WASHBURN COUNTY REGISTER

### Obey, Jauch visit Spooner

Regan Kohler  
August 27, 2008

SPOONER - Congressman Dave Obey visited Spooner, along with Sen. Bob Jauch, Thursday, Aug. 21, meeting with constituents at Triangle Park to discuss what has been going on at local and national levels.

Jauch kicked off the discussion, speaking of Wisconsin's proposed mercury rule, which aims to reduce mercury emissions from factories and to prevent dumping it into the lakes, poisoning fish and threatening people. He said it can be removed if the state makes the right decisions and creates tougher standards.

Jauch said the Assembly of Natural Resources voted to kill the rule, and that manufacturers and commerce are opposed to it, but the Democrats are voting on behalf of public interest, and when the rule comes before his committee, it will pass.

"The objections will be rejected by the Department of Natural Resources," he added.

It is offensive, he said, that a legislature wouldn't put public health ahead of its own interests. This is the stark difference between parties, he said.

Jauch addressed the matter of taxes, saying he does not like the knowledge that the economic elite find ways to avoid paying sales tax. For example, Jauch said, the Pepsi company pays sales tax, while "Coca-Cola pays none."

Without debating whether or not Wal-Mart belongs in Spooner, Jauch said, the company has set the book for tax abuse. He said the company creates a subsidiary where it places a store and charges that store rent, which gets deducted from the taxes. Jauch said the money then is rerouted back to Wal-Mart.

The Democrats, however, have included a provision that would prohibit companies from using rent as a discount for taxes.

"We want to make sure that we don't gouge individual citizens because corporations aren't paying their share," Jauch said.

Obey then spoke, addressing what Jauch had said about the mercury rule. There is talk of removal from lakes being too expensive, he said, but questioned whether this would be worse than having a child suffering from brain damage because its mother ate a mercury-poisoned fish during pregnancy. Obey said this is not an accountant's issue, but the government's responsibility to protect citizens.

In the United States, the recent years have seen incredible economic instability, Obey said.

"Where does that instability come from?" he asked.

Obey said the budget is inadequate, and that if the president's original budget had passed, it would have not supported additional funding for veterans health care, and cut grants that could go toward research for the National Institute of Health. Meanwhile, he said, mortgage debt went up by \$7 trillion. Congress is acting to prevent foreclosures, though, he added.

Speaking to the presidential election, Obey said he thought he knew candidate John McCain, but his television ads are untruthful. Obey said McCain has been claiming candidate Barack Obama will ruin middle-income families with his proposed tax package.

"That is a crock," Obey said.

Obey said Obama's idea is to reverse and reduce taxes for those individuals making less than \$200,000 a year, and couples making less than \$250,000 a year.

Obey said candidates have a responsibility to go beyond TV ads and dig deeper.

In Congress, Obey said, he is frustrated because the national press is so enamored with the glitz of the elections, they aren't reporting what Congress has accomplished.

"They are not getting the message through ... on what the Congress has done on substance," he said.

Obey recited a list of things Congress has passed in the last year:

The largest expansion to the GI Bill of Rights on education benefits.

An additional \$7 billion to the president's budget for veterans health care.

More assistance to working college students.

An extension of unemployment compensation to those whose period has ended but still cannot find jobs.

Senior and low-income citizens receiving an increase in heating assistance.

The first increase in minimum wage in 10 years.

A ban on insurance companies using genetic information, to eliminate discrimination.

The addition of 3,000 border patrol agents.

Strengthening the dairy farmers milk program.

Obey said Congress also helped save Wisconsin's SeniorCare program, and these are just a few things. He said people cannot accuse Congress of doing nothing.

"I was there," he said. "I know what we did."